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HOW MUCH DO I STUDY THE BIBLE, AND HOW ?

RESPONSES TO THIS QUESTION FROM WORKING PASTORS.

II.—REV. J. L. WITHROW, D.D.,
The Third Presbyterian Church, Chicago.

III.—REV. O. P. GIFFORD,
Immanuel Baptist Church, Chicago.

Study of the Scriptures attests their divine origin: should lead to urging others to accept them as a whole: nothing but unquestioning certainty will avail for this: hence unremitting study: English versions sufficient.—Bible study should permeate all study: especially related to the study of men: is studied critically: is studied sympathetically: with prayer.

I study the Scriptures from two to three hours for one hour that I give to any other book. And the more I dwell upon them the more they attest to my deepest needs their divine origin. So much so, that it seems to me poorly spent time touching them that is not taken to induce others to receive the volume as God's words, with neither ifs nor ands of any other element in it that is worth mentioning. I use the A. V. and the R. V., and the Greek and Hebrew. I read no other Oriental tongue. The Greek Testament is very precious. I do not read the Hebrew with critical scholarship, although I do as an ordinary scholar. To my thought, however, the English versions, aided by exegetical helps from the Hebrew and Greek, furnish any pastor with what he needs for both food and fire. The greatest lack of my preaching and of the preaching I hear is enthusiastic and intelligent presentation of the Scriptures as the oracles of God. I have no knowledge of having ever helped a single hearer out of his head or heart troubles with anything else than a full expression of a full faith in the straight assertions of Holy Scriptures. Hence I study them by books, by topics, by verses, and any other way that lets me deeper into them.

J. L. W.

How much do I study the Bible, and How? A hearer once complimented Dr. Lyman Beecher on the power of a sermon, and asked, "Doctor, how long were you writing it?" "Forty years, Sir," was the quick reply. All his thinking life went into it, as it must into every work which is well done.

How much? My business is with the Bible as the Word of God, and with men as the children of God; as the farmer studies the seed and the soil, and relates the two, so I try to study the Bible and men, and relate the two. I study men in the light of the Word, and the Word to get light for all men, all questions of casuistry, ethics, life, are brought to the Bible for settlement, so that when studying at all I am studying the Bible. Its statements are always present in my mind when reading history, science, literature of any sort; any and all truth I find is classified in its relation to those statements, with the double purpose of getting a better understanding of the Bible, and of giving that better understanding to men.

All my reading thus serves the double purpose of enriching my mind, thus fitting me to help others, and of understanding the Bible, thus helping me to God's thoughts, that they may become man's thoughts, and God's ways, that they may become man's ways.

How? I. Critically; seeking to find just what the writer said, and what he meant when he said it. I assume that the text I have tells what the writer did. Assume it after study of questions of authenticity and genuineness; assume it on my faith in the Christian scholarship of men who have as much at stake as I have, and are far better qualified than I am to settle questions of scholarship. Taking the best text I can get, I bring to it the best lexicon, grammar, commentary I can procure (Meyer, Ellicott, Godet, Westcott, Lightfoot, Smith, Dods, Driver). Men of vision as well as grammar and lexicon. Having found what the author said, I try to find why he said it; and try to reproduce the occasion, the surroundings, the needs to be met, the questions settled, the principles involved. To reproduce the past as Pius Æneas saw it reproduced in Dido's new city. Spend a day with Paul in Rome, Corinth, Ephesus, distinguish between the

eternal principle at stake and the temporary limited application of it to the point in view. This compels study of history, archæology, politics, the contrast between eternal principles and changing conditions, the danger of treating certain statements as exhaustive of truth, when they were meant to be only applications of truth to specific needs. The water of life is always more than the bucket with which it is drawn, and the principle in an epistle or gospel is larger than the local application, but one need to know the local application to understand the principle. Texts are not points of departure, but springs in the heart of oases. The student should camp on the oasis, but study to enlarge it and conquer something of the desert by giving free flow to the truth.

Study the man who wrote, get at his inner life, the civilization of which he is the product, and in which he is a producer; get at his family affairs, early education, religious convictions; get the personal equation in his report of celestial phenomena. The Gospel is according to Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul, that word according may carry much in the way of interpretation, no two men see the same rainbow, "Put yourself in his place," get his point of view. To do that you need to be on intimate terms with him, and this means careful study.

II. Sympathetically. The truth is more than the text, as the soul is more than the body. The tailor may get the surface measurement of a man, but the tape-line makes no friends. Lexicon and grammar, critical study may get the surface of the text, but only sympathy can touch its soul. "Faith comes by hearing," and in these days by reading, but the loan of ears or eyes will not get at the treasure of the text; soul speaks to soul, heart to heart, sympathy is the soul of scholarship.

This last involves, of course, prayer as a preparation; prayer as a condition; prayer as an atmosphere enswathing the soul, that the light, breaking forth from the Word, may be mediated to the soul of the student. It also involves the Holy Spirit. If "Holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," their truth can become our truth only as we are moved

by the Spirit. Thought runs from mind to mind, love from heart to heart, truth from soul to soul.

When Paul, Peter, John, Jesus speak of life, death, faith, love, find what they meant, why they said it, what the temporal application, what the eternal principle, and what the present application of that principle is and ought to be. O. P. G.